

TRACE

A CHRONICLE OF LIVING LITERATURE

Featuring Lawrence Lipton

No. 11

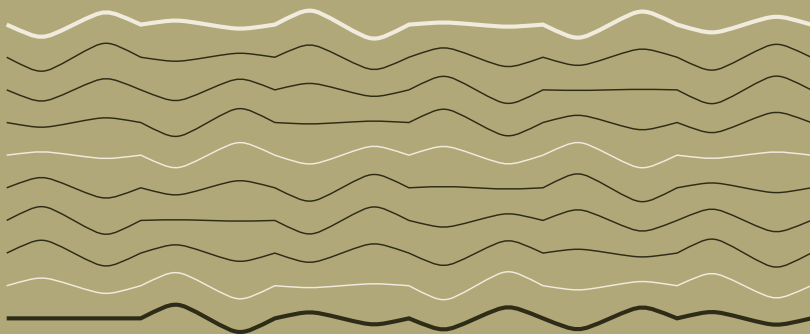
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JAMES BOYER MAY / EDITOR



TRACE

No. 11

Living Literature

Essays & Articles · Poetry · Reviews

April 1955

Edited by James Boyer May

A READING EDITION

ABOUT THIS EDITION

This reading edition preserves the issue's poetry, fiction, essays, correspondence, reviews, and other literary writing in their printed order. Advertising, subscription matter, mastheads, the magazine's own contents pages, annual indexes, address lists, and the running trade directory are omitted as reference apparatus.

The text was checked against newly rendered source pages. Poetry lineation, stanza spacing, shaped indents, and hanging continuations for long lines are retained; prose continuations are joined without false paragraph indents. Conjectural readings are enclosed in square brackets, while original spelling and punctuation are otherwise kept.

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SOME SHOP TALK ON POETRY AND DRAMA

by Lawrence Lipton (U.S.A.)

The Greeks had a word for it. In fact they had two words for it. Poietes: maker. And Drama, fr. draien: to do, to act. The related word tragoidia meant goat-song: tragos, he goat + oide, song. Singers clothed in goat skins. The origin of Greek drama in ritual drama is too well known to require documentation here. What is not so widely known is the fact that draein, to do, to act, had little if anything to do with what we today call action on the stage. It had nothing to do with a Jose Ferrer spouting verses during sword play in *CYRANO DE BERGERAC*, to prove, as some have supposed, that verse is natural speech, as natural as prose, and therefore suitable to the stage. Greek drama demands little more than declamation from the actor.

Nor did draien have anything to do with intellectual action, the play of ideas. Nor with emotional action, the conflict of drives and desires. It was meant to be something much more literal. The drama itself was expected to do something, to perform an act. It was in this sense that ritual drama was conceived: a form of words, music and dance which, when it is correctly performed, makes something happen; e.g., the rain to fall, the sick to be healed. (If the actors missed a word or garbled a line, if the dancers or musicians faltered or tripped up, the ritual lost its efficacy.) In a word, drama was functional in form and practical in effect. The poet was the maker who made the form of words (and music and dance) that enabled the drama to do, to act, to perform its function. Thus, the poet and only the poet could make drama.

Aristotle's katharsis derived its meaning from the participation of actor and audience in the therapeutic mystique. However, by Aristotle's time the therapeutic purpose of ritual drama had been so far forgotten and/or corrupted that Aristotle was able to say with what must have appeared good sense to the sophisticated Greek of his time, that 'the initiated do not learn anything so much as feel certain emotions and are put in a certain frame of mind.' Note that the value judgement here is learning, not healing, not katharsis; or would it be fairer to say that to Aristotle the learning was the healing? Even the more intuitively endowed Plato was not above asserting that the mystery drama was 'agreeable child's play.' Orphism survived, of course, among the poets, who never quite forgot that Orpheus was not only poet and musician but also healer. The 'animistic' act of the ritual drama survives in the poetic $A=B$ formula of the ideographic metaphor, but without the literalism of homeopathic magic, of course. Its potency (when it has any) lies in its subjective effect. It is more than probable that ritual drama, even in its earliest form, was understood in the same way, at least by those who made it and performed it. Too much nonsense has been written about 'the mind of the primitive' and his literal conception of 'magic.' He knew the mask from the man, the shadow from the substance. His faith in the efficacy of the word, the spell, was based on sound psychology of a sort that is only now being rediscovered.

It would add precision and point to the discussion now going on about poetry and drama if the word 'drama' was reserved for the functionally therapeutic act of poetry in public performance and the word 'play' was used to denote what we customarily call 'drama' today. 'Play' has the force of make-believe in its derivation. Drama was never make-believe; it was Reality. It was not make-believe until playwrights forgot the function of drama and began to write

plays under the mistaken impression that they were writing dramas. Only poets can write dramas.

That does not mean that drama written in verse is necessarily drama. Archibald Macleish's *THIS MUSIC CREPT BY ME ON THE WATER* (BOTTEGHE OSCURE, No. 11) poses the problem of the lost music, the 'dark knowledge that we once have known' (if I may quote a line of my own verse), but it is not drama despite the fact that its characters are given lines of verse to speak instead of prose. He seems to be aware of this himself and has since made some valid distinctions concerning poetry and prose on the stage. (See his *THE POET AS PLAYWRIGHT*, ATLANTIC, February 1955). In a polite (O ever so polite!) controversy with T. S. Eliot, he calls for a much more resolute and radical attitude toward poetic drama than Eliot's 'No play should be written in verse for which prose is dramatically adequate.' The key word here is dramatically, of course. It could mean practically anything, but Eliot is much too precise a writer to dodge definitions. He made it perfectly clear (in his Harvard lecture four years ago) that what he meant by the word was action, but what he means by action is open to question, and Macleish, for all his politeness ('Mr. Eliot's great reputation is secure') is compelled to take issue with him. For Macleish has a glimmer of the dramatic 'act' as the Greeks conceived it, and he knows that something has gone out of drama. He is groping for that 'something' in his own *THIS MUSIC CREPT BY* —. Not in the way he handles the verse or the construction of the play, but in what the characters are given to say. All these nice literate people of his are groping for that 'something.' They end up in the Antiles, a garden above the sea, and they talk about it, and around it, and what it finally amounts to for them is something having to do with moonlight and sex. The dark knowledge is somehow to be recaptured by getting away from it all to some island in the moonlight and 'letting go' of one's sexual repres-sions, one's civilized sophistications, and

‘going native.’ They are saved from it at the last, of course, by their good sense and good breeding—‘HELEN: Nothing has happened. It’s all right. ELIZABETH: I know. HELEN: Nothing. Nothing at all. (The door opens. Chuck is standing there with a cocktail shaker in his hand.) CHUCK: Supper’s over; breakfast’s cooking.’

Obviously this is not an act in the Greek sense of the word. Nothing has happened. In fact, everything was done to keep it from happening. No *deus ex machina* need intervene, because no god was invoked. The audience can go home with the feeling that ‘nothing has happened,’ nothing that might require anything on their part, at least. No death, no rebirth, no initiation, no regeneration. Nothing, in short, that the act of drama should do. Dramatically, therefore, prose would have served the purpose just as well. Macleish has a glimmer of the ‘something’ that is missing, but only a glimmer. ‘To regain the stage in its own character,’ he says, in the ATLANTIC article, ‘not as a mere emulation of prose, poetry must find its own poetic way to the mastery the stage demands—the mastery of action . . . What poetry has lost is the power to imitate an action . . . Until it can people the stage again with actions which are at once poetry and drama, poetic drama will not exist . . . The true problem is the problem of the poetic organization of action in such a time as ours.’ The italics are mine—to point to the place where the shoe pinches. Ritual drama in Brooks Brothers clothes—aye, there’s the rub.

James Schevill, in *HIGH SINNERS, LOW ANGELS* (Bern Porter Books) attempts to prove that poetry can come from the lips of Twentieth Century prostitutes and politicians and still be drama in the true sense of the word. The corrupt mayor experiences hubris and undergoes a kind of death and rebirth in the end, and the prostitute is a kind of Cassandra who is fated never to be believed—till the end. But since the action of the piece is related to nothing more numinous than

the concept of social uplift and political liberalism, it packs about as much katharsis as a case-worker's report. The fact that the verse is little better than percussive prose is beside the point. Better poetry would only have pointed up its failure more precisely. It is a play and not a drama because it presents, it pictures, it does everything but become. I use the word here in the sense in which Schevill himself uses it in his poem, HERMANSKI, THE HOBO, AND THE HOTEL OF DEATH:

And I become the salesman who travels, the teacher
Who kills himself, the tideless whore,
The virgin cast beyond the hope of sex,

All those who bleed their time like ticks.'

(EIGHT AMERICAN POETS, p. 48, Villiers Publications, and in the recording PACIFICA, Inferno Press.)

The 'animistic' A=B character of poetry (and poetic drama) survives in poetry, but it has vanished from drama, even in the work of the same poet, as in Schevill's case. That 'something' fails to get itself transferred to the stage.

Is it only a question of 'such a time as ours,' the Brooks Brothers suits? Kenneth Rexroth takes no chances with costume. In the four verse plays that comprise his BEYOND THE MOUNTAINS (New Directions, 1951) he dresses his characters (Phaedra, Iphigenia, Hermaios, Berenike, Agamemnon, et al) in costumes that would have been considered sparse even on the Greek stage. His sets are simple, the barest minimum. His classical references are few and require no notes, his images are universal, timeless, as easily identifiable 'in such a time as ours' as they would have been in the Athens of Aeschylus or Sophocles. His Whore and his Beggar, and his People (choruses) are equally timeless, i.e., contemporary. So is his vocabulary. For example :

HERMAIOS : History ends in death.

DEMETRIOS : Fortune

Is only changeable to those

Who can't adapt themselves.'

and again :

'DEMETRIOS : Men are thrown into prominence

By circumstances that match their

Characters. History has both

very rash and prudent moments.

HERMAIOS : The actions of men move in cycles.

The gods never do the same thing twice.'

Nothing that couldn't have been spoken by actors in Brooks Brothers suits. But even so, Rexroth prefers to keep the costuming and the sets as simple as possible, to keep them from getting in the way of the poetry. He employs the same economy of means with his stage action, i.e., the movements of his characters. He demands no more of them than Sophocles demanded in his dramas or Wagner in his operas. The emphasis is on the word. If anything is to happen it has to happen in the poetry. The words must do the doing, the acting. The word is the deed. This comes pretty close to drama as the ritual act. I have not witnessed a performance; but if I may presume to criticise Rexroth's effort on the basis of a reading, I should point to the fact that he has circumvented the problem of drama in 'such a time as ours' by simply ignoring the 'problem.' If any katharsis takes place when these pieces are performed, if they perform a ritual act in the sense of to do, to act, it would have to be because the audience is willing (or able) to translate, so to speak, the 'signals' (in I. A. Richards' sense) and the symbols (in Susanne K. Langer's sense) from their Greek originals into contemporary terms. This in spite of the universality and timelessness of the poetic image and vocabulary. This is not impossible.

T. S. Eliot took advantage of a shortcut to a ready-made audience in his first effort at poetry in drama. In *THE THREE VOICES OF POETRY* (ATLANTIC, April 1954) he tells how he encountered the problem of the Third Voice ("the voice of the

poet when he attempts to create a dramatic character speaking in verse”) when he was commissioned to write a pageant play called *THE ROCK*. He admits that he failed, that the characters ‘were speaking for me, not uttering words that really represented any supposed character of their own.’ *MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL*, he tells us, represented some advance in dramatic development, ‘but as for the dialogue of the play, the plot had the drawback (from the point of view of my own dramatic education) of presenting only one dominant character, and what dramatic conflict there is takes place within the mind of that character.’ Sound self-criticism, so far as it goes, but what Eliot fails to realize is the fact that performing the play in a cathedral, before a cathedral audience, solved half his problem before he started. Solved it—and evaded it. But ordinarily, the secular stage cannot depend on such a ready-made response.

The third, or dramatic voice, did not make itself audible to me until I first attacked the problem of presenting two (or more) characters, in some sort of conflict, misunderstanding, or attempt to understand each other,’ he goes on to tell us, ‘characters with each of whom I had to try to identify myself while writing the words for him or her to speak.’ This he tried to do in *THE COCKTAIL PARTY* and *THE CONFIDENTIAL CLERK*. The result is a kind of Sophocles cum Noel Coward drawing-room comedy that has made a hit on Broadway because it gives the first-night kulchur vulture the flattering illusion that he is patronizing the high art of poetic drama — and buying salvation for his soul, cheaply, into the bargain. In advertising lingo : You Too can talk poetry! Even in a Brooks Brothers suit.

Richard Eberhart documented the same dilemma (without the Broadway success — so far) in *THE VISIONARY FARMS* (*NEW WORLD WRITING*, No. 3). It isn’t that ‘Hamlet’ can’t be done in modern clothes — if it’s ‘Hamlet,’ and not the cheap libretto of a ‘Carmen Jones’ in burnt cork and blue

jeans. It has to be in the words, in the poetry, before it can be drama in the functional sense of to do, to act. And I mean poetry, not the super-Elizabethan fireworks of Christopher Fry. To paraphrase Ezra Pound's 'poetry should be at least as well written as prose,' poetry for the drama should be at least as well written as for the eye or the 'poetry reading.' The poet, in a business suit frayed at the cuffs, reading his poems to a campus audience, can be more effective, in the ritual, functional sense, than *THE CONFIDENTIAL CLERK* or *THE COCKTAIL PARTY* with first-rate actors and all the devices of the stage at their disposal. Even the improvised therapeutic sketches that the psychologists at St. Elizabeth's mental hospital in Washington, D.C., are experimenting with (*TIME*, January 24, '55) are closer to the real thing. Tennessee Williams was reaching for it in *CAMINO REAL*. His Kilroy was the stuff of which the Holy Fools were made in ritual drama. The firstnighters walked out on it on Broadway. Was it because the 'conviction of guilt,' the challenge that it presents to the soul of the audience, is more authentic—and harder to take—than the vague (off-stage) 'crucifixion' of Eliot's heroine in *THE COCKTAIL PARTY*?

Dylan Thomas came closer to it than anyone else in *UNDER MILK WOOD*. Llaregub, the Welsh village under Milk Wood by the wash of the Towy, is as 'exotic' as Rexroth's Greek locale, but it is 'this place of love' and 'a greenleaved sermon on the innocence of men' and, as such, easily within the normal responses of a modern audience. There is in it transfiguration and salvation, despite (because of) the promiscuous sexual love. It is 'innocent' in the sense that the ritual hierogamy was 'innocent.' It lacks all the Aristotelian 'unities'—what has the soul to do with time and place?—but it comes to life in the one way that matters (matters, that is, for poetic drama) in the invisible world of the spirit.

Close, but still not close enough. It may well be, of course, that poetic drama in the truest sense of the word is

impossible 'in such a time as ours.' It may well be that functional drama is not possible in a nonfunctional society. That one term of the equation is lacking—the audience. An audience with a universally accepted 'mythos' that it shares with the poet. This is something that the poet lacks to day, whether in drama or any other form of poetry. It is not something the poet can create. A COCKTAIL PARTY or a LADY'S NOT FOR BURNING may create customers for something called poetic drama, but it cannot create an audience. Perhaps the best any of us can do is become forerunners, exploring the way, leaving warning signs at the blind alleys, DEAD END STREET, and arrows pointing the way to roads not yet built and a goal not yet seen.

TOWARDS PRINT

by the Editor of Trace

Substantial increases in readerships and in subscribers could be realised for most periodicals listed in the DIRECTORY, if each reader of this periodical had a chat with the nearest librarian. Many, in addition to recommending favorite magazines might afford to donate two or three subscriptions to a library.

The chain benefits would be virtually endless; for the strengthening of the magazines would enable expanded policies, rendering them increasingly effective in whatever their intentions, and consequently more valuable to whatever audiences . . . and finally, of course, providing more outlets to writers. Perhaps payments to writers, where no pay before, and increased cheques where same have been nominal.

This and much else would seem obvious enough that space should not be occupied detailing it. However—why then have not more TRACE readers taken this simple action? And doubly, why not, where they are themselves writing?

For dozens of recent small symptoms have indicated beyond question that larger audiences do exist for these magazines, that their failures (in too many cases) have resulted simply from their not having become known. The trouble has been that the percentages (to entire populations) of prospective interested readers have been small, and that no media for addressing publicity economically to these segments of educated minorities have existed. Nor have there been available selected lists for direct-mail advertising. None other than subscriber rolls of other magazines, the editors of most of which had until recently been keeping these selfishly and mistakenly secret.

Results reported from use of some of these lists have been among the indications regarding potential audiences. For instance, whereas returns on mail solicitations generally are but one or two percent, those on a few of these lists have ranged from eight to twenty percent. But the limitations of expanding circulations just through interchange of present subscription rolls are manifest ; and manifestly, channels must be found for reaching all the thousands not already subscribing to some magazine. Although, considering how many utilising library reading-rooms do so from economic considerations, the suggestion here may not be all that could be hoped (as method), it at least is one neglected avenue for progress in the direction of widening contacts amongst this admittedly-special (and elusive) audience.

Reports indicate the probability that this is an unusually propitious time for such a campaign. Notably, reports seeping about from the National Book Award meetings (New York City) as re conversations among those allegedly most in the know concerning trade prospects. Although book sales are dropping and forecasters see a year of fierce competition (175 major publicity drives for books are scheduled this spring) for dwindling business, anxiety seems to have been expressed by some over the increase in little magazines and reported larger circulations both of these and literary quarterlies. This even was referred to in terms of competition!

Aside from the mistaken judgment and psychology of the last (for besides implementing sales of the best modern books, little mags are so many barometers for wise publishers to observe for portents of the climate of taste) all this is interestingly indicative. And we, to be sure, have direct knowledge that sales of such magazines have increased rather astoundingly in the last two years. As smart publicity men understand, the most fruitful time to exert extra sales efforts is not when sales are declining, but when

they are rising; consequently, every alert little-mag editor will no doubt be undertaking expansion during 1955.

A closely related factor in this entire picture (and one to which commercial publishers well might pay wiser heed than to silly speculations about little mags offering competition) has been a continued increase in publications of limited editions of books of poetry and experimental prose by more small presses throughout the world. For, if book sales generally are falling off, why then there also is a marked bettering of conditions for these other special books, many of the mss. for which are known to have been rejected by large houses. Could it be that these editors for the big firms were in some degree mistaken in their choices of material for print? May they not have been wrong in presuming that some fairly substantial minority of the reading public was not ready for some changes of diet and would not buy in profitable numbers some few works of what they'd deemed too advanced an advance guard?

As from little-mag editors, reports from small presses show that many are breaking even financially, for the first time in their histories. If the signs mean anything, it would look probable that most of the reported 175 major U.S.A. book drives are certain to realise so many losses to major publishers, while a few minor book drives by minor publishers very well may pay handsomely (by their scale/s).

Another not insignificant verification of mistaken conservatism in New York apparently has been echoed in to-do over what is said to have been increasing inroads of British books. These are, necessarily, books which have not been published in the U.S.A., inasmuch as British houses, by common consent, do not sell books in competition (at the deflated sterling rate) where similar editions are available in America. And even with regard to British magazines also sold in U.S.A. either by subscription or through bookstall distribution, should be noted that prices by dollar ratio are

substantially higher (by one-third usually) than would be by currency exchange. See, for instance, this very TRACE, which sells in England at one shilling (equivalent a bit more than 14 cents U.S.A.), but in America at 20 cents. So that the competition is on a fair basis, at least; and to the extent it's true that British publications are making inroads in the U.S., this must then be due to exercise of better judgments in what's offered.

For, despite many plain evidences that a good deal of what's in little magazines and books from smaller presses is for an advance-guard elite, those either trained or self-disciplined to prefer the neoteric to the familiar—and thus offered for a perhaps ever-narrowing special audience — a good deal of the contents of these publications is being found stimulating and amusing to readers of no special training or taste whatever. Not only this, but conditions in publishing have been such that most of this work has come to exhibit professional finish, if not actual high literary merit, which — after all — never may be expected of any but a small percentage of writings in the most exclusive periodicals or books by the most selective of publishers.

It's been suggested that the day has arrived when the better little magazines should be treated (critically) less as higher manifestations of a phenomenon represented at the lowest by some very amateurish and ill-begotten little bastards, and more in relation to their closer kinship with the legitimate (at least, legitimised by public respect) large magazines pretending to print the best established writers. And more and more, the little magazines are printing many of the same writers. And on its face, this suggestion sounds plausible. But this then would be a drive toward 'acceptance,' which, if successful, would destroy the very function of these magazines, which would find survival very tough indeed, if then (in actuality) propelled into competition with products from well-financed publishers.

But details of the foregoing have been treated at length in other places. Mention here is only to point further reasons why all good little magazines well may become stronger at this time, if not to be encouraged to try to achieve big-mag status.

Related to these matters is comment just received from James Schevill (formerly editor both of BERKELEY and EXPERIMENT MAGAZINE) to the effect that the double role of many editors, who also are writers, is what defeats them in these practical aspects; and he suggests the only solution is in finding an independently-functioning business manager.

EDITORS WRITE

Edwin Hicks (WIDE OPEN) : ‘We want vigorous, original, yet unsophisticated fiction. We place the emphasis on content. Experimentation is permissible providing it is not for the sake of experimentation. We believe that styles and forms can and should be as varied as contents ; that a really significant idea expressed clearly and economically justifies ANY departure from orthodoxy.

‘How middle? No esoteric stuff. We realise its value, but this is not a charitable project. Nor do we want the formulae that clutter up most pulps and many slicks. We have a conscience too. We simply feel that there is a need for a mag containing quality stories which could be appreciated by many people. Sorry I can’t be more definite, but in our endeavour to reconcile quality with a mass market, who knows where the equilibrium will lie?’

Ellen Edelman (PENCHANT PAPERS) : ‘... will include both creative work (poetry, stories, short plays, et al) and comment. We will publish whatever “experiments” we find that are valid experiments in the terms which we have all learned to accept in this experimental generation. Yes, of course, we will “know” valid experimentation subjectively only—but how else to know anything? Tentatively, we plan to have the March issue (No. 2) printed.’

Frederick Woods (PLATFORM): ‘As you may . . . not have seen the editorial in No. 3, I repeat here: It is poetry . . . written with passion, wit, taste, style, and the indefinable but essential feeling of “inevitability” that PLATFORM seeks to publish. As to my revised policy, I can scarcely do better than quote from the editorial of No. 4: To concentrate too narrowly on poetry is to run the risk of parochialism. Nothing is more depressing than the reader or writer who is interested only in poetry, or even the literary person whose

interests are exclusively in literature. Even in these days of minute and inevitable specialisation, one must remember that for the true humanist knowledge is indivisible, and, whatever Pope is supposed to have said, even a little knowledge is surely preferable to the numbing ignorance which many people display when lured away from their own “special subject.” In future issues of PLATFORM we shall, therefore, devote more space to prose; we hope to publish articles, not only on literature but also on music and the visual arts, and on such separate and closely related fields as philosophy, history and religion. We shall welcome authoritative and crisply written articles on these subjects, aimed at the intelligent general reader rather than the specialist, normally not longer than 3,000 words. We shall be glad, too, of short stories and travel pieces up to 2,500 words, and, of course, poems, preferably showing achievement rather than promise.

‘A pretentious programme for a magazine of the modest dimensions of PLATFORM? Possibly; but someone must make the effort to get a little genuine interplay of ideas going. If we get the support we deserve, we shall expand.

‘Why this volte-face from the original intention of publishing work by unknown poets? Simply because we have found that such a policy does not succeed. We simply do not receive enough good poems, whether by unknown or established poets, that we consider good enough to print, and certainly not enough to go on filling whole issues of the present size of PLATFORM.’

R. M. Schulster (THE DAVID-A QUARTERLY OF WRITING): ‘I can best tell our editorial policy by quoting our statement of policy from the first issue, as well as I can remember it—since the material is currently at the printer’s: This work was undertaken because those of us connected with it felt there to be an historical need for a magazine which would concern itself solely, as is our intent and purpose, with the

writer as an artist.'

Orma McCormick (STARLANES): 'Our purpose is quite simple. At the time we started, there were hundreds of science fiction poems being published only in mimeo-ed format (fanzines), and many of these were excellent, and I felt this new field should be encouraged.

'Only when some mediocre poems are placed with true poetry, can the beginning writer compare his work, and comparing, be encouraged to improve.

'We are happy to report that much more new material is coming in, and once we have sufficient quantity that definite selection can be made, STARLANES will continue to improve. Our first issues . . . were limited, because we lacked much choice.

'I fell sure the future issues will maintain a higher standard than the earlier ones. Right now, I am accepting only poems that are science fiction, fantasy, weird, or at least borderline. My only objective is to produce a truly specialised all-science-fiction poetry magazine.'

ADDENDA

The idea having been put forward again and again, TRACE is prepared to offer a worldwide 1955 Directory of small presses, provided that co-operation of all readers can be enlisted. Their help will be vital to the project; for there are no funds with which to advertise nor to circulate return forms for compilation of data. As with the magazine Directories, the free aid of interested persons must both inaugurate this and keep it going. If every reader in any way connected with an enterprise he feels should be listed will mail at once a page of essential data, and if every reader will send a list of names and addresses (only) of existing enterprises within his knowledge, nearly 100 percent coverage should be possible in a brief period.

Primary, of course, is the definition of 'small press'—which by the usual conception is first of all a noncommercial (in larger sense) press. That is, its imprint only rarely may (and then usually in conjunction with some large house with trade distribution avenues and a selling staff) appear on books offered to mass audiences. The small press specialises in limited editions which cannot profitably be advertised on national scales, by reason of the limited investment and limited potential of total sales. It is not necessarily a vanity press, nor a press where the authors contribute anything whatever to financing. Many, within this definition, are supported by schools and other public or semi-public institutions. Some are maintained by wealthy patrons or foundations; and a few (with their own physical equipment) actually may operate at a modest profit.

While referring to vanity publishing, distinction should be made between those presses which will accept ANY writer's ms., and simply require that the authors, themselves, assume all financial risks, and those which exercise editorial

discrimination in determining whom to publish, and ask the writers (usually, from sheer necessity) to share in the financing—as by underwriting sales of a fixed number of copies or etc. With poetry, in particular, conditions have been such that even many established older houses (which surely could not be called vanity publishers) have drawn contracts under which the author's financial co-operation has been required — and needless to add that advance-royalty payments are not usual.

No presses within our definition will be excluded from listings — not even those which no more than sell printing under an imprint (*viz.*, do not undertake sales of even portions of editions). However, primary data will include concise statements of editorial policies, and frank summaries of financial arrangements offered. Without such information, the Directory would have much less practical value. It need hardly be added that those small presses limited to special fields — as political pamphlets, religious tracts, etc. — will not be included. Included, nevertheless, will be small houses devoted chiefly to graphic arts (other than production of catalogues).

There will be comparatively slight overlapage of listings with existing directories, except in the field last mentioned and that of university presses in the U.S.A.

Other than indicated by the foregoing, names of editors and dates of foundings will be required.

. . . And meanwhile, a steadily increasing flow of interesting pamphlets and small books to this address is becoming too large to permit (any longer) individual mentions of a large percentage of these in these pages. From among those arriving since the first of the year, one deserves a note, because symptomatic of a trend in certain types of bookstores to become their own publishers of scarcity-appeal (or snob-appeal, if you prefer) items. A PIGEON WING, by Jack Curtis, comes from PORPOISE BOOKSHOP, 628 Montgomery St.,

San Francisco 11, Calif., U.S.A. (\$2). This attractive booklet, with frontispiece by Ross Curtis, the poet's brother, is representative of the sort of thing meant . . . and however dubious the service to poetry generally from this specific item, such projects do enable so many more poets to be heard ; and from among them may emerge some really ready to be heard?

The serious intentions of BERN PORTER BOOKS (also San Francisco—1480 Larkin) again having been underlined with distribution of important BROADSIDE publication of Bertrand Russell's PLEA FOR SURVIVAL, attention also is due the just-appearing GRAFFITI by Gogo Nesbit (Mexico). This hitherto-unprinted writer has been hailed by Mr. Porter as the most important woman poet of today. And the book indicates a versatile talent of no small range, plus a thinking mind equipped with a vast store of knowledge—plus high passion. It's not easy reading—but on the other hand, richly repays study. And it's also heated with genuine bardic fire, both in metrical and free-verse portions. Villiers will shortly publish a British edition of this book.

And while on San Francisco activities—to note that the very active State College POETRY CENTER there, besides continuing to sponsor public readings by international figures, is launching its own programme of book publishing.

Still another California project of keen interest is that of GOLDEN GOOSE PRESS, offering a series of poetry readings on pre-recorded tapes, the first venture of its kind (\$8 per reel, from Box 583, Sausalito).

Poets presented in readings from their works include W. H. Auden, Norman Macleod, Theodore Roethke, Robert Duncan, Kenneth Rexroth, Richard Wirtz Emerson, George Elliott, Leslie Woolf Hedley, Philip Lamantia, Robert Horan, and others.

Poets who have agreed to read at the Poetry Center, as it can be arranged, include William Carlos Williams, John

Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Kenneth Patchen, Karl Shapiro, and others.

Poets planning to visit the West Coast are invited to write the Poetry Center.